

JANUARY 1922  
RECKLESS RALPH'S

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

OFFICIAL ORGAN-HAPPY HOURS BROTHERHOOD  
(Reprint)

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Upon the cover page of the Original issue, a fine illustration of THE BOYS STANDARD, No.124, New Series (original Cover) appeared, featuring the story-DICK WHITTINGTON-Thrice Mayor of London.

A POPULAR THRILLER OF THE 1880'S.

The most successful of the Charles Fox publications. Published in two separate series from Nov. 1875, to October, 1892..First number contained opening installments of the famous stories, "Follow my Leader, or, Lionel Wilful's Schooldays", by Harry Emmett. and, "Gentleman George" by J.J.G.Bradley.

Other sensational series which appeared later, were, "Handsome Harry", by E.Harcourt Burrage; "Spring Heel'd Jack, the Terror of London", and, "Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street." A real old boys' book !

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## THE DIME NOVEL

Its Place in American Literature  
By Ralph F. Adimare.

The first question to be settled before we begin is, "What is the Dime Novel ? " No satisfactory answer has yet been agreed upon by the few who have casually studied it. Therefore, we might settle this now. The Dime Novel has the following characteristics:

- 1.It has punch.
- 2.It is written for boys.
- 3.It is purely an American form of story writing without any European influence, as it holds up the mirror to the American scene.
- 4.It contains only swift action, romance and Adventure.



The first Dime Novel actually appeared in 1867, as a serial. The Dime Novel was sold in nearly all cases, for a nickel. It got its name from Beadle's Dime Publications, first published in 1860, which do not stand the test of the four characteristics previously mentioned. It flourished between 1867 and 1915. The golden age of this form of literature was between 1875 and 1895---two decades of brilliant glory. It had a more profound influence on American youth, than any other contemporary force. It was a unique, passionate form of art, and in its day, rivalled the best literature of other countries.

In the ensuing articles, we shall give a comprehensive history of its birth, its background, its publishers, and its authors. Of course there will be many errors and omissions. This cannot be helped, because most of those interested are dead, and practically few records are left, describing the writers of these tales. In many cases, not one, but dozens, wrote under the same non-de-plume. This makes it very difficult for the student. He must wade through a great deal of trash before he discovers a gem. And the question then confronts him, "Who was the author?" And here he is checkmated.

## I

## THE BACKGROUND OF THE DIME NOVEL.

Not until the War of 1812, did America begin to grope its way out of the spiritual blight it had fallen into. Nothing of any value in an artistic sense, was produced until James Fennimore Cooper, (1798-1851) appeared on the scene. Cooper was one of the first to transfer the locale of a story from foreign shores, to the rich American soil. It needed a bold, free spirit, like his, to have taken so drastic a step. Until his time, the youthful nation looked to Europe for its literature. And woe to any American who dared think differently!

However, we cannot say much for Cooper's works. In the main, they were dull, tedious, and artificial.

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While the characters are represented as Americans, they are little different from Scott's Englishmen. They lack that punch, that charm, that gay romance which the Dime Novel had in abundance. Compared with "Emerald Jim," "Old King Brady Out West" or, "Frank Merriwell's Horse", Cooper's "Last of the Mohicans" or "The Spy", appears feeble and archaic. Cooper's works in all details except the locale, are like the conventional European writings of his time. He did one other service--He gave the Dime Novelist, the Indian and the trapper. We must credit him with the nucleus of the Dime Novel. And for this service, his name will not be dimmed in American literature.

Almost at the same time, a young passionate Southerner came North with mighty pen in hand. This firebrand with deep wild eyes and rumpled hair, was Edgar Allen Poe, (1809-1849). It was noticeable when he arrived, that the European lackeys scudded for cover. American art began to awaken, thoughts flew thick and fast over the land. Poe struck right and left, and drew blood. There was no compromise in this American lad, and while he despised the very masses he fought for, the people began to respond. They sought for native authors, native art,--a thing not thought of, before Poe's time.

Poe attempted a new art form--the short story, and was successful. With the publishing of "Murders in the Rue Morgue"--"The Gold Bug"--"The Purloined Letter" and other magnificent tales, American literature began to take root. It had passed the acid test with flying colors. While it is true that the short story was known long before Poe, nevertheless, it was he, who gave it its rebirth. In Europe the market was flooded with pompous, long-winded novels, which irritated Poe, into the creation of the short story. Thus, in his short tragic life, he paved the way for the American epic, which needed but two more figures, to complete the drama.

Poe's contribution to the Dime Novel, was the detective. While it was purely an American character,



the French alone recognized its value, and not until Gaboriau and E. Du Boisgobey exploited it to the limit did the slumbering American realize his romantic qualities.

(It is interesting to note that Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue" - "Gold Bug", etc. were first issued in dime novel form, the size being about five by eight inches. They were not considered by the "Know-it-alls" as fit for cloth covers, like, for instance, Cooper's Epics. Having paper wrappers, the average reader destroyed them, when read. Few People took the trouble of saving paper books. Even in those days, paper books were considered trashy. This is the reason why Poe's first editions bring such fabulous prices.)

Soon after the Frenchmen, appeared our three greatest detectives--Old Sleuth--Old King Brady--and Nick Carter.

Most of Poe's attacks were directed against the New England school of literature. This notorious school, the villain in the drama, was composed of such highlights as, Longfellow, Bryant, Hawthorne, Lowell, Holmes, and Whittier. Their toadyism to European culture, is one of the grand tragedies of American literature. Why such high-minded souls permitted their undoubted talents to be corrupted by foreign and decadent influence, is a problem for the psychologist to solve. Everywhere around them, youth quivered and pioneered, and there was an abundance of rich material, wherein the artist could wallow to his heart's content. And what did these ancient graybeards accomplish in this golden period of American history? They eked out after terrific effort, such thoroughly alien products as, "Hiawatha" - "Snowbound" - "Scarlet Letter" - "Bigelow Papers" - "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table", etc. The trouble with them was, in short, that being third and fourth-raters, they were incapable of throwing off the yoke of a rich English inheritance. They observed the American scene through eyeglasses made in Europe.



To them, the lands west of the Hudson were inhabited by coarse pioneers, and they shuddered whenever anyone was unmannered enough to mention their brothers, while they sampled tea at some lady's house. What chance did native literature and art have, under such baneful influence?

(To be continued).

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### THE PUBLICATIONS OF CHARLES FOX.

By Henry Steele.

The Boys Standard was the most famous of the journals issued by Charles Fox. The first number appeared on November 6, 1875. The first series ran to 288 numbers. The new series commenced on May 14, 1881, the heading of the journal being altered and improved. The Journal ran until October, 1892, and was then discontinued.

It was in the Boys Standard (Old Series) that "Handsome Harry" and several of the Ching Ching stories appeared, written by that notable boys author, E. Harcourt Burrage.

The Boys Standard was a formidable rival to Edwin J. Brett's Boys of England, although the latter survived the Charles Fox journal by several years.

The Boys Leisure Hour, was another popular journal issued by Fox. The first number appeared on August 23, 1884. It ran to November 28, 1891, when it was incorporated with the Boys Standard.

The Boys Champion Journal started on April 1, 1889, and ran to 144 numbers, finishing on December 28, 1891. The stories in this journal were mostly re-issues of those that had appeared in the Boys Standard.

A very short-lived periodical, was the Boys Half Holiday. This appeared in May, 1887, but only ran to twelve numbers. This also contained re-issues of tales in the Boys Standard. It was incorporated with the Boys Leisure Hour, in July, 1887.

In 1892, Fox brought out, Every Boys Favorite Journal, the first number appearing on January 7th. It had a short run of thirty-nine weeks, and finished very abruptly.



The Boys of the Nation, appeared on September 5, 1895, and thirteen numbers only were issued. It was an attempt at re-issuing stories under fresh titles.

The Halfpenny Standard Journal, first issued on March 18, 1896, was more successful, and ran to eighty-five numbers in all, finishing on September 20, 1897. This was really good value for the money, although the paper it was printed on, was very inferior. The stories were re-issues of Boys Standard tales. This was the last of the Fox Journals.

In addition to these, however, Charles Fox published the Boys Weekly Novelette, June 1892 to September, 1895 and the Champion Library (complete novels) in 1891. He also issued a number of stories in weekly penny numbers, such as "Turnpike Dick"- "Broad Arrow Jack"- "Captain Macheath"- "Sweeney Todd"- "Guy Fawkes", etc. The second number was given away with the first, the two numbers being enclosed in an illuminated wrapper, and sold for one penny.

To mention all the stories in the Fox journals, would require more space than is allotted to me in this valuable little magazine. Therefore, I must content myself with mentioning just a few of the outstanding ones, which appeared in the 1860's.

THE BOYS STANDARD: "The Black Flag" by Stephens Hayward, on 1880; "Jack 'O Clubs" by Charles Stevens, in 1881; "The King of the Pampas" by James Borlase, and "The Link Boy of Old London" by Vane St. John, in 1882; "Jack Rag" by E. Harcourt Burrage, in 1883; "The Huguenot Captain" by Charles Stevens, in 1884; "Tim No'er-do-well" by Vane St. John, in 1887; "The Three Gladiators" by Charles Stevens, in 1888; "The Outlaw of the Highlands" and "Alfdorn, the Sea King", in 1891; "King Arthur", by Charles Stevens, in 1892.

THE BOYS CHAMPION JOURNAL: "Wallace, the Hero of Scotland" and "The Imprisoned Heir", in 1889; "Old Winchester, on 1890; "Colonel Blood" and "Dickon, the Page" in 1891.

EVERY BOYS FAVORITE JOURNAL: "The Gipsy Gentleman" and "Tom Merry at School", in 1892.



BOYS LEISURE HOUR: "Bluecaps, the Bushranger" and "Wonderful Ching Ching", by E. Harcourt Burrage, in 1885; "King Charles' Oak", by Charles Stevens, in 1889. BOYS HALF HOLIDAY: "The Doomed City" by Bracebridge Hemming, in 1887... Many of the stories that appeared in Fox's journals, were originally published in Emmett's journals. "King of the Pampas", for instance appeared in The Young Briton (1873) and "Link Boy of Old London" appeared in Sons of Britannia (1873).

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### FACTS ABOUT JOHN R. MUSICK.

By Fred T. Singleton.

Mr. Wm. L. Beck's "Note on D. W. Stevens" in December number of our magazine, is just the kind of a contribution calculated to bring out the real facts about the matter discussed. Mr. Beck admires the Stevens stories, believes that John R. Musick wrote them, but frankly states that he does not know much about him.

Mr. Wm. J. Benners, King-pin of the old-timers and readers, and the world's authority on serial story papers, informs me that D. W. Stevens was a pen-name owned by Frank Tousey and used for his publications, and not a nom-de-plume used exclusively by John R. Musick--if indeed ever used by him.

Mr. Benners met John R. Musick's wife in California, some years ago, and further states that Musick lived and died in Kirksville, Missouri, and that Mrs. Musick is at present, living in Los Angeles; a practising osteopath.

However, just ten minutes ago, I picked up the only copy of Potter's old Yankee Blade, which I have, dated October 12, 1889--a special circulation-building sample edition, containing opening installments of several stories, and featuring a John R. Musick story, "The Clan-Na-Gael Exposed, or, Delving into the Cronin Mystery", on the front page.

Curiously running thru the paper, I noticed a column headed in small type, "John R. Musick", and by mere chance, discovered a fairly comprehensive



biographical notice of this writer, at that time, at the height of his career, and getting publicity as star writer for the Yankee Blade. The notice was accompanied by an old-fashioned woodcut portrait.

According to this document, plainly, under all the circumstances, written by, or written from data furnished by Musick, himself; he was born on a farm in the vicinity of St. Louis, Missouri, in 1849. The story-writing passion was developed in him at a very early age. In 1859, he wrote his first sketch, and walked with it, nine miles to the editor of a country paper. His first money for his work came in 1873, when he sold several sketches to a New York paper. He put himself thru college, very largely, by his own exertions, though aided by his father. After graduation, he taught school in St. Louis, studying law in his spare time, being admitted to the bar in 1876. In the same year, he married a Miss Rozselle.

Musick practised law for a while, but in 1882, he burnt his bridges and devoted all his time to writing, earning \$2000.00 the first year.

An early serial by Musick, "Herbert Arton, or, Justice Counts in the West", appeared in the American Monthly Magazine in 1878. One of his most successful stories was, "The Banker of Bedford", published in book form by D. Lothrop & Co.. Others were, "Brother Against Brother" and "Celebrity Row."

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Various Ads appeared in the original, of which this is a REPRINT, including: Ralph F. Cummings--Charles Bragin-Parks, Printer--Amateur Mart--Fred T. Stevens--Helping Hand--Hobby World--Raymond L. Caldwell--J. Edward Leithead--Wm. M. Kreling--and Toledo Book Exchange.